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*too old...*

*Ont. Community and Social  
Services*

*V/F*



## Nine years old . . .

No real parents or home of his own, and too old to be adopted—that would have been Jeffrey's story ten years ago. Along with mixed racial, handicapped or retarded youngsters, the older child used to be the one with the greatest need and the smallest chance of ever finding a family to call his own. After suffering the anguish of losing his natural parents through family breakdown, the best Jeff could have hoped for was the temporary security of foster care.

The reason? Everybody wanted to adopt a baby, and if you were nine years old, with a history of problems, you were bound to be overlooked.

## New life

But today, the adoption picture has changed and Jeffrey has been given a new lease on his young life through adoption. Through the specialized help of a social worker, Jeffrey became attuned to the idea of becoming a part of a new family, and the family was prepared to welcome Jeffrey on the understanding they would have to help him accept some of his unpleasant memories.

The reason the older child is at last coming into his own is simple. No longer is there an over-abundance of infants commanding the attention of adoptive parents. With more and more unmarried parents who seek counselling making the decision to keep and care

for their own children, plus more readily accessible birth control and abortion measures, the number of infants coming into our care has taken a sharp decrease. Consequently, many couples are being encouraged to look to older children.

Some of these are —

- children of various racial backgrounds
- children with physical or emotional handicaps
- slow learners
- brothers and sisters who want to stay together

For these children, "family" is a dream. Couples with the ability to accept these children can make their dream a reality. The venture is naturally a greater challenge than adopting an infant.

## Preparation

The social worker's visits with both of you together, separately and in your home, will help you decide if you and your family are ready to make room for another child in your midst.

Naturally, since the adopted child needs to be accepted by your children as well as yourselves, your youngsters should be prepared to make some adjustments, too. Your firm lead in establishing the new child as a member of the household will make all the difference during the initial uncomfortable "getting-to-know-you" stage.



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...to find real  
parents?

— a look at the adoption  
of the "older" child

Family and Children's Services of the Niagara Region





As a rule, a child who comes into our care beyond the age of two has had some frightening or unsettling experiences. His memories may leave him afraid to take a chance on forming a relationship with new adults.

Take for example, the four-and-a-half year old who behaved atrociously for his new prospective parents as a means to prove to himself that they really wanted him. Dumping pails of sand over his head, refusing to go home from visits with family friends, soiling or wetting himself—nothing was too devious for the tactics of Tommy. Had his adoptive parents not been prepared for a long period of acting out, they would not have been able to cope with him.

Your recognition that the older child is already a person and must be accepted as such is imperative in forming this relationship. It is an involved responsibility, and the only motive that will stand the test is an intense desire to be parents. All fantasies of doing a charitable deed, strengthening a marriage, or providing a companion for your own child will vanish as you face the realities of starting from point 0 with your actual new child. You should prepare, too, to form a close working relationship with the social worker who will be a help to you during the probationary period before adoption is legally finalized, and afterward, whenever you wish to consult her.


## Completion

Should you decide to take on the challenges and rewards of adopting an older child, or any child for that matter, you gain the status of parents of the child.

The Child Welfare Act of Ontario requires that the child live with the adoptive family for a period of six months before the adoption can be made legal. For older children, this period is often extended. During this time of adjustment, it is best for the mother not to be employed outside the home.

Upon issue of the adoption order, all rights, duties, obligations and liabilities are vested in the adopting parents as if the adopted child had been born to them.

A telephone call to the adoption department of your Children's Aid Society will put you in touch with a social worker who will be glad to discuss adoption with you. There are many children like Jeffrey who are not too old to find parents.







*Jeffrey*

(a new face in the family album)



## Ministry of Community and Social Services Queen's Park

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### Facts you might like to know

The number of "older" children placed on adoption has almost doubled in recent years, and a further increase is predictable.

Thus far, 85% of these adoptions have been successful.

Because of the change in trend in adoption, with fewer infants available, Children's Aid Societies employ specialized social workers to deal solely with placing the older child on adoption.

Although the number of infants in the care of the Children's Aid Society is constantly diminishing, 85% of all couples who apply to adopt still request an infant.

Couples considering school-aged children wait a shorter period of time for an adoptive child to be placed in their homes than do those waiting for an infant.



Prepared by

Family and Children's Services  
of the Niagara Region

Consult your local Children's Aid Society

(a new face in the family album)